

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

865D 77

SEE 865d.01/107 FOR #1710

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED May 29, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

865D.77/1

### REGARDING:

Railroads. Reported that Djibuti railway is now operating regularly and doing heavy business. Article by Corrado Zoli in TRIBUNA recommends that Harrar region be given a port in Italian territory and mentions Assab as a possibility.

rc

### Railroads.

It is consistently reported that the Djibuti railway is now operating regularly and doing heavy business. Incidentally, an article by Corrado Zoli in the TRIBUNA of May 21st recommends that the Harrar region be given a port in Italian territory and mentions Assab as a possibility. This same writer states that a project is now under consideration for the extension of the Massawa-Asmara railway to Tessenai and thence to Om Ager and suggests that this should be altered, bringing the railway from Tessenai to Kassala to connect with the Sudan railway, with only a good automobile road between Tessenai and Om Ager. He also recommends an Asmara-Adigrat-Adowa branch.

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

✓

SEE 865d.01/119 FOR #1733FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED June 10, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 \*\*\*

REGARDING: Possibilities of Djibuti or Harrar as an outlet for  
Ethiopian products. Harrar is considered as the  
best outlet due to its proximity to the sea. Harrar  
is also being considered as an outlet into Italian  
territory.

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/142 FOR Despatch #1756

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED June 26, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127

REGARDING: Djibouti railway- Italian East Africa. Negotiations are being conducted with regard to,--.

Negotiations are being conducted, according to certain correspondents, with regard to the Djibuti Railway, particularly as to freight rates. It is noted that while merchandise for the Negus was carried at 50 % of the regular tariff, all shipments are now paying full rates. In view of the fact that traffic over the line has now increased greatly (being at present between 600 and 800 metric tons per day as against 350 during the period of maximum activity preceding Italian occupation) and also of the fact that Italy threatens to open up a route between Assab and Dessie for her supplies, it is believed that some arrangement can be reached.

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

865D.77

4

SEE 865d.01/149 ..... FOR #1776 .....

FROM Italy ..... (Kirk ..... ) DATED July 9, 1936 .....  
TO ..... NAME ..... 1-1127 ...

### REGARDING:

Reports the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway is carrying 600 tons a day. Company has ordered fifteen new locomotives to take care of traffic which continues to increase. Weekly express train inaugurated on July 3rd, to cut down time between Addis Ababa and Djibouti.

### Railways.

The Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway is reported to be carrying 600 tons a day. The company has urgently ordered fifteen new locomotives to take care of the traffic, which continues to increase.

On July 3rd a weekly express train was inaugurated, which will cut down the time between Addis Ababa and Djibouti from three days to two days.

865D.77/4

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/157 FOR Despatch #1797

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED July 22, 1936.  
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Interruption of traffic on the Djibouti railroad. On July 6th a band of marauders tore up the railroad line and cut the telegraph communications between Addis Ababa and Djibouti with the intention of robbing two trains loaded with foodstuffs. Were driven off and the railroad now is safe.

wth

865D.77/5

865d.77

## DOCUMENT FILE

### NOTE

SEE 865d.01/166 FOR #1863

FROM Italy (Tittmann) DATED Sept. 2, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Italian administration and development of Ethiopia.

Foreign Commercial interests. Addis Ababa-Djibouti  
Railway (French) Agreement concluded between the  
Railway management and the Italian Government.  
Details now made public provide for greatly reduced  
rates and special concessions.

865D.77 / 6

9

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/171 FOR Despatch #1889

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED Sept. 16, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 070

REGARDING: Railroads- Italian East Africa. The Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway company has ordered private railway cars for the "King Emperor".

### Railroads.

The Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway company is reported to have ordered private railway cars for the "King Emperor," the Duce, and the Viceroy, from Italy.

Repairs are being made to the tracks and curves are being re-enforced, in order that express trains, beginning

on October 1, may cover the distance between Djibouti and Addis Ababa in twenty-seven hours instead of three days. It is said that when railway equipment ordered in Italy arrives, this time will be further cut down to twenty-four hours,

865D.77/7



8652.77/8

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

8

SEE 765.84/5066 FOR Tel. #583, 2 pm

FROM Ethiopia (Engert) DATED Oct. 10, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 epe

865D.77/8

REGARDING: Railway between Doukam and Addas. Information that -, has again been cut. Train due to leave for Djibouti this morning was held and no explanation given.

ge

NE  
WE

JR

This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (A)

Addis Ababa

Dated October 10, 1936

Rec'd 10:55 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

583, October 10, 2 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

*Note  
865d.77*

I am reliably informed that the railway has again  
been cut between Doukam and Addas about 25 miles down the  
line. Train due to leave for Djibouti this morning was  
held and no explanation given.

TENGERT

NPL

5066

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

8650.77  
SEE 765.84/5070 FOR despatch #176

FROM Ethiopia (Engert) DATED Sept.4, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 070

REGARDING: Agreement between Italian Government and the  
Djibouti Railway.

Signed in July, for a period dating from Aug.1  
to Dec.31, 1936. puts an end to friction  
over freight rates and refusal of the  
company to accept lire in payment thereof  
and passenger fares.

dg

8650.77/9

9

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 765.84/5068 FOR Tel. #585, 10am

FROM Ethiopia (Engert) DATED Oct. 12, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127

## REGARDING:

Freight train derailed by small band of Abyssinians who  
escaped, however, train service was reestablished on  
Oct. 11.

ge

8659.77 / 110

NE  
WE

LMS

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A)

Addis Ababa

Dated October 12, 1936

Rec'd 3:45 p. m.

Secretary of State, .

Washington.

585, October 12, 10 a. m.

My 583, October 10, 2 p. m.

865d.77  
One. It appears that a freight train was derailed by a small band of Abyssinians who escaped. Train service was reestablished yesterday.

Two. This incident on the eve of the arrival of the Italian Ministers for Colonies and Public Works has greatly embarrassed and annoyed the Italian authorities who believed that with the end of the rainy season such attempts were no longer possible so near the capital.

865d.01  
Three. Preparations are now being hastily made to extend the Italian occupation west and southwest of Addis Ababa. Ras Hailu whom the Emperor had imprisoned for disloyalty is being used by the Italians to head a band of about a thousand Ethiopians to act as a vanguard. Accompanied by a body of askaris with white officers they arrived at Addis Alem some 30 miles (?) west about September 17th. But shortly afterwards Ras Hailu returned to the capital injured by a fall from his mule but according to some with a bullet

5068



LMS 2-No. 585, October 12, 10 a. m., from Addis Ababa.

a bullet in his leg.

Four. Six Italian planes flew to Lekempti a few days ago after the Italian authorities had made sure that the local Galla governor Habte Mariam was no longer hostile. The planes are reported to have returned safely.

Five. A large motorized column is soon to start for Jimma. As in the case of Ras Hailu a native Moslem chief-tain Abba Jobir grandson of a sultan of Jimma has already been sent on ahead with some eight hundred Mohammedan followers.

ENGERT

CSB

CA

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone (A)

1-1336

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

ADDIS ABABA

Dated Dec. 2, 1936

Rec'd 8:13 p.m.

DIVISION OF WESTERN  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

FROM  
DEC 4 1936

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary of State,

Washington,

664, December 2, 3 p.m.

Legation's despatch No. 176, September 4th.

CONFIDENTIAL

It appears that negotiations are now in progress for the purchase of the Djibouti Railway by the Italian Government.

The Italian military have been complaining bitterly ~~since last May~~ <sup>since last May</sup> ever ~~complaints~~ of the utter inadequacy of the railway for present requirements. They state that 35,000 tons of supplies and other goods have been accumulating at Djibouti owing to the fact that the maximum capacity of the line is only about three hundred tons per day. Shipments other than for official purposes have practically ceased and little parcel post packages suffer delays of several months.

As it was found impracticable to order additional rolling stock from Italy as provided in the agreement transmitted with my despatch No. 176 the French company has as an emergency measure, procured some spare cars and locomotives from the Yunsfu Railway in China with whose <sup>management</sup> it is closely affiliated.

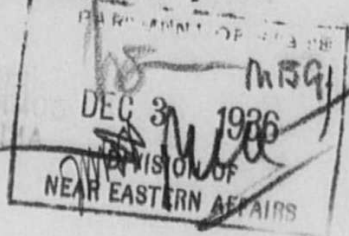
ENGERT

EMB RGC

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEC 3 1936

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE



865D.77/11

FILED

DEC 8 1936

GH

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.1561/2 FOR Despatch #835

FROM Paris ( Southard ) DATED Feb. 1, 1937  
TO NAME 1-1127 . . .

REGARDING: Railways- Italian East Africa. Italian group seeks French capital to finance construction of a **port at** Assab and a railway to **Dessie**, or **Millie**, Ethiopia. Translation of an article from LA PRESSE COLONIALE of January 27th.

fp

865D.77/12

12 GH



No. 835

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Paris, France, February 1, 1937.

SUBJECT: Italian Group Seeks French Capital to Finance Construction of a Port at Assab and a Railway to Dessié, or Millié, in Ethiopia.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

Sir:

I have the honor to submit, as of possible interest, the translation of part of an article in LA PRESSE COLONIALE, of January 27, 1937, in connection with the agitation over the potential serious repercussions on the commerce of the French port of Djibouti, French Somaliland, and the French-owned railway from that seaport to Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

Development of Assab.

The Italian port project at Assab, Eritrea, 155 kilometers from Addis Abeba, as reported in L'ITALIA OLTREMARE envisages the construction of an exterior protective dyke 700 meters long to cover 2 kilometers of quays provided with ultra modern equipment for discharging and loading cargo, to be completed in four years by the "Sindacato italiano Costruzioni opalti marittimi" at a cost of 80,000,000 liras.

The projected highway and railway line for which Assab will be the seaboard terminus will lead to Millié (300 kilometers) and be followed on the high plateaus

(Dessié)

(Dessié is at 2,500 meters altitude) by a "téléférique" or overhead cable line, the construction of which has been assumed by the "Société Cerretti Ianfarri".

French Capital Sought.

According to LA PRESSE COLONIALE, a French commercial journal, the representative of a duly accredited Italian group appeared recently at one of the Paris commercial banks to inquire if they would be interested in financing a vast program of public works to be executed in Ethiopia. Invited to indicate the particulars of the projects expected to be realized, the caller made known that they applied in the first and most important instance, to the construction of the port of Assab and a railway from there to Dessié or, more precisely, to Millié which is at least 100 kilometers from the precipitous trade center. The representative further stated that before "feeling out" the bankers he had already been in touch with several groups of French industrialists and, in particular - which could be verified - that he was assured of the collaboration of a powerful metallurgical firm in the North of France, which would participate with the group guaranteeing the financing. In addition, it is believed by the writer of the article, that there are also conversations with reference to the same subject indicating Italian - German collaboration in East Africa.

A clipping of the entire article referred to is enclosed.

Respectfully yours,

Enclosure: As stated.  
815.6  
DBL/mg

Addison E. Southard  
American Consul General

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 741.65/329 FOR Despatch #194

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED Feb. 4, 1937  
TO NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING: Italo- British agreement which will free Italy from the French monopoly of railroad transportation facilities between Addis Ababa and the coast.

865D.77/13

Although no specific mention is made of France in this connection, the Italian press implies that this agreement will free Italy from the French monopoly of railroad transportation facilities between Addis Ababa and the coast. IL PICCOLO states that with the contribution of these two outlets England puts back into operation the two best points of her Colony and Italy guarantees itself against "any monopolistic schemes and exorbitant rates."

The recognition aspect of the Agreement was discussed in the telegram under reference and no further comment thereon has appeared in the Italian press.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/286 FOR Desp. #371

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED May 20, 1937  
NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING:

Report of Italian administration and development of Ethiopia.  
Report from Paris stating that the Ethiopian capital at  
Addis Ababa would probably be transferred to Dessie in view of the un-  
suitable climate. Express alarm over the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway  
if such a move is made.

ML

865D.77 / 14

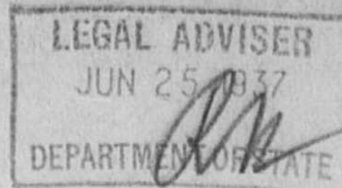
GML

865d.77



VOLUNTARY REPORT

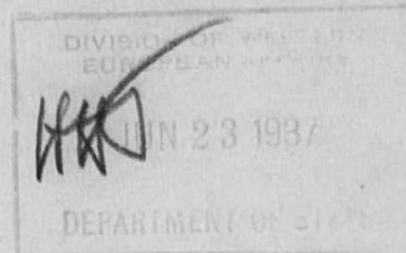
5  
RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE



EU  
AC  
VE  
LE

1937 JUN 22 PM 12 23

DIVISION OF  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND RECORDS



865d.77

RECEIVED	COMMUNICATIONS SECTION
DATE	FILE
copy to American Embassy, Rome.	

Commercial Office (A-9/U)

Rome  
6/24/37

SUIT AGAINST ITALY ON RAILWAY STOCK PLANNED BY NEGUS

865D.77/15

(For the Transportation Division, Department of Commerce)

From American Vice Consul

Davis B. Levis.  
Davis B. Levis

APPROVED:

Addison E. Southard  
American Consul General

Paris, France. Date of Completion: June 11, 1937.

Date of Mailing: June 11, 1937.

FILED  
JUN 25 1937

GMB

A repercussion of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict is seen in the report, according to a Paris daily, that the Negus now hopes to recoup part of his fortune by suing the Italian Premier Benito Mussolini in the Paris courts.

This newspaper states that the Negus desires to sell 30,000,000 francs (approximately \$1,360,000) worth of stock in the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway operating between Djibouti in French Somaliland and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, but is opposed by Italy, which avers the stock belongs to the Ethiopian Government, to which Haile Selassie is no longer attached. Attorney Paul Weill, who is named by the journal as handling the case for the Negus, did not deny the story when questioned, but declined to comment on it.

The journal referred to stated that when the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway - which is a French line - was constructed, the Negus was given 30,000,000 francs in stock for his permission to build the line across Ethiopian territory. When the Negus left Ethiopia he took with him his stock, which is said to have been made out in the name of "The Ethiopian Government".

However, on two occasions - August 24, 1936, and February 2, 1937 - the Italian Government intervened to prevent the Negus from selling or transferring his stock on the ground that there was only one "Ethiopian Government" and that was Italian.

The former Emperor's reply to this was that the railway line was owned by French interests and France

had

had not recognized any Ethiopian Government other than his own. He therefore took the position that he was the de jure head of the government and the sole legitimate owner of the securities.

Consequently, according to THE NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, Paris Edition, quoting from the PARIS-SOIR, a Paris court will be called upon to decide upon the legal ownership of the railway stock.

Note: The French owned Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway operates between Djibouti, French Somaliland, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Eighty-eight of the 284 kilometers traverse a desert region in French territory. This is the only railway line in the two countries. Extensive harbor improvements are under way at Djibouti where the increased traffic since the war has taxed both port and railway facilities.

Source of information:

Article in NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, Paris Edition, of May 10, 1937, based on PARIS SOIR.

877.2

DBL-mm





EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 968

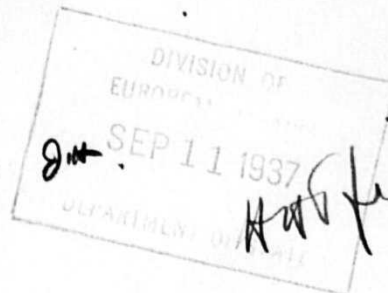
Paris, August 25, 1937

*Handwritten initials and signatures in the top right corner.*

Subject: Franco-Ethiopian Railway Bonds

Copy Transmitted by The  
Commercial Office (A-M/O)  
To

*Rome*  
*9/14/37*



FOR DISTRIBUTION - CHECK	
To the field	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
In U. S. A.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Embassy - Rome</i>	

6  
RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

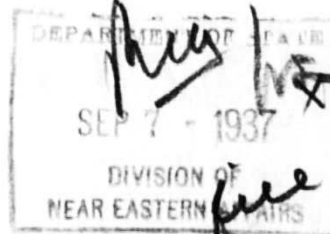
1937 SEP 4 AM 10 50

DIVISION OF  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND RECORDS

865D.77/16

The Honorable

The Secretary of State  
Washington, D. C.



Sir:

I have the honor to report that according to the press the Negus, when he fled from Ethiopia, took with him 8,000 shares of the "Compagnie du Chemin de fer Franco-Ethiopien de Djibouti à Addis-Abéba", which shares were made out to the name of the Government of Ethiopia, and that shortly after his arrival in Europe he attempted to cash the coupons of these shares but was prevented from doing so by the opposition of Mr. Silvio Lessona, who lives in Florence and who acted as agent of the Italian Government.

The .....

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
A-M/C

SEP 8 1937

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
A-M/C

SEP 14 1937

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE

FILED

SEP 15 1937

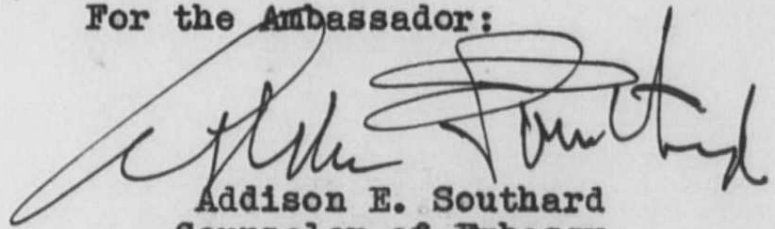


The Negus claims that he is the Government of Ethiopia and that therefore he has the right to cash the coupons and also the right to change the bonds to bearer bonds. On the other hand, the Italian Government claims that it is now the Government of Ethiopia. This case is now before the Civil Court of the Seine and M. Maillefaud, President of that Court, has announced that the matter will be examined on October 12, 1937.

It should be noted that this will be after the September meeting of the Assembly of the League, at which, it is stated, there will be taken up the question of Ethiopia's membership in the League.

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador:



Addison E. Southard  
Counselor of Embassy

In triplicate  
SH/hfc



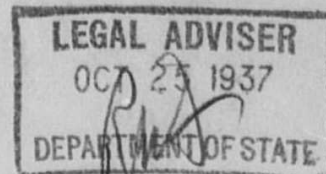
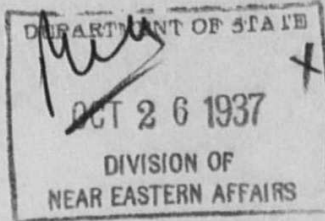
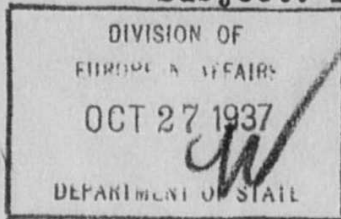
EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 1123

Paris, October 14, 1937

~~NE~~  
~~EU~~  
~~Am~~

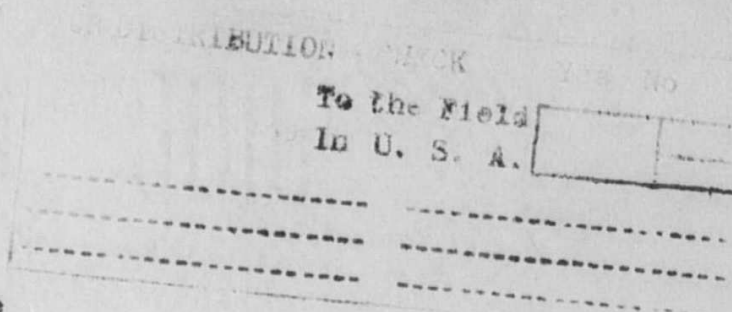
Subject: Franco-Ethiopian Railway Bonds



RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1937 OCT 23 AM 11 41

DIVISION OF  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND RECORDS



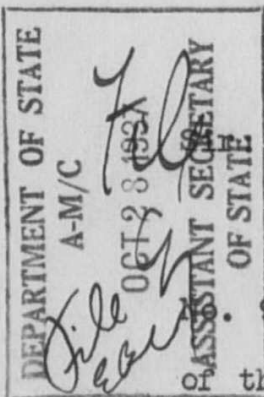
865D.77/17

A-M/C  
RECORDING DESK  
FILE - *ch*

The Honorable

The Secretary of State

Washington, D. C.



865d.77/16

With reference to the Embassy's despatch  
No. 968 of August 25, 1937, concerning the request  
of the Negus that certain bonds of the "Compagnie  
du Chemin de Fer Franco-Ethiopien de Djibouti à  
Addis-Abéba" which are in his possession be changed  
to bearer bonds, I have the honor to report that  
according to an article published in LE FIGARO of  
October 13, 1937, M. Maillefaud, President of the  
Tribunal of the Seine, postponed the discussions  
in this case for a fortnight, despite the fact

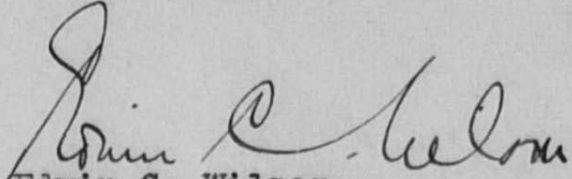
that ....

NOV 1 - 1937

FILED

that the lawyers of the Negus demanded that the discussions be commenced at once.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Edwin C. Wilson', written in dark ink.

Edwin C. Wilson  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

✓  
In triplicate

851

SH/hfc

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 751.65/444 FOR Tel. 375- 8am

FROM Italy ( Reed ) DATED Dec. 12, 1938  
TO NAME 1-1127 \*\*\*

REGARDING: Djibouti- Addis Ababa railway. Editorial by Gayda in which he points out that the French had steadfastly refused to make any real improvement in the service or reduce rates. and duties or to deliver to the Italian Government railway shares belonging to the Negus.

fp

865D.77/18

M



DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 751.65/459 FOR Tel#2157 4 p.m.

FROM France (Wilson) DATED Dec. 23, 1938

TO  
///

NAME

1-1127

\*\*\*

REGARDING:

Transfer of 2500 shares of the Djibouti Railway from a French group to an Italian group. Conversation with Rochat regarding Italian denunciation of the 1935 agreements and the -.

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 740.00/561 Bullitt 7-76 FOR Tel. #165, 5 pm

FROM France (Bullitt) DATED Jan. 30, 1939  
TO NAME 1-1127 \*\*\*

REGARDING: Djibouti railroad. Bonnet stated if relations should improve greatly it might be possible for France to sell control of the -, to Italy and establish a free port in Djibouti.

ge

865D.77/20

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.00/43 FOR #10FROM Aden ( Dunham ) DATED Feb.7, 1939  
TO NAME 1-1127 070

REGARDING: Railroad from Djibouti to Addis Ababa.

Statement of James A. Mills, Associated Press correspondent, that no Italian is permitted to use the - and that a highway has been furnished between Addis Ababa and Massawa where lorry traffic is in operation.

865D.77/21

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 751.65/570 <sup>Confidential</sup> FOR Te. 401- 3pm

FROM France ( Bullitt ) DATED March 3, 1939  
TO NAME 1-1127 \*\*\*

### REGARDING:

Railways-Italian East Africa. Statement of Daladier that he thought the Italians would demand Addis Ababa Djibouti railroad.

fp

8650.77/22

~~Confidential File~~



# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 740.00/697 Confidential File FOR Td 588- 5pm

FROM France Bullitt (                      ) DATED March 28, 1939  
TO                      NAME                      1-1127 870

REGARDING: Sale of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railroad. A note sent by the French Government to the British Government on December 27 stated flatly that there would be no,-.

fp

865 D. 77 / 23 2 3

*Confidential File*

Central File: Decimal File 865D.77, Internal Affairs Of States, Italian East Africa, Railway. Concessions. Construction. Equipment., May 29, 1936 - March 28, 1939. May 29, 1936 - March 28, 1939. MS European Colonialism in the Early 20th Century. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, [link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5109727881%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC](https://link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5109727881%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC). Accessed 18 June 2025.